(c) if so, the justification made by them in their demand; and

(d) the reaction of the Central Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) The total production of maize in the country was 14.98 million tonnes in 2003-04, 14.18 million tonnes in 2004-05 and 14.71 million tonnes in 2005-06.

(b) and (c) The All India Starch Manufacturers' Association had demanded regulation of exports until the arrival of the next kharif maize crop in October, 2007 on the ground that 6-7% shortfall in World output is expected during the current year as compared to last year resulting in more demand for imports. Further, they have estimated that domestic production will fall short of demand for maize.

(d) Government has allowed the import of maize under Open General License at zero duty till 31.12.2007 as a measure to improve the availability of maize and containment of prices in the domestic market. The ban on export is not compatible with the World Trade Organization provisions.

Per hectare rice production

3197. SHRI S. ANBALAGAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government had taken note that country's per hectare yield is very less in rice production;

(b) if so, the details thereof during the last three years particularly in comparison to China, Japan and USA;

(c) whether Government propose to initiate fresh steps to increase per hectare yield of paddy/rice in the country as this would ease the pressure on limited availability of lands in the country; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) The table below gives per hectare yield of paddy in the country in comparison to China, Japan and USA during the years 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-2005 (latest available):

Year	Per Hectare Yield of Paddy (Kg/Hectare)			
	India	China	Japan	USA
2002-03	3111	4108	5850	7477
2003-04	3041	7498	6415	7833
2004-05	3147	3899	6648	7438

SOURCE: FAO website accessed on 30.04.2007

Among the above three countries, India's per hectare yield of paddy is the lowest. The yield of rice is equal to 2/3 of paddy yield.

(c) and (d) In order to increase the productivity and production of paddy/rice, a Centrally Sponsored Scheme "Integrated Cereals Development Programme in Rice Based Cropping System Areas (ICDP-Rice)" is already in place. Under the scheme, assistance is provided on 90:10 per cent basis between the Government of India and the State Governments, for production and distribution of certified seeds, propagation of improved production technology, integrated pest management, training of farmers, farm implements, installation of sprinkler irrigation system and varietal replacement. Further, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has developed more than 700 high yielding varieties and 28 hybrids suitable for different agro-climatic conditions. Frontline demonstration are also organized by ICAR on farmers' fields on 100% Central Government assistance for transfer of technology. A minimum price guarantee is also provided to the paddy growers through the price support mechanism.

Crop loss due to snowfall and rains in northern India

3198. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that untimely and unseasoned snowfall and rains in northern India during March, 2007 has destroyed crops in the areas;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the likely loss of wheat and other cereals due to rains and snowfall;